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Filed : February 11, 2002

REMARKS

Claims 1-3 and 8 were pending in the application, were previously allowed, and then withdrawn from issue. Claims 1-3 and 8 are again presented herein for examination.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103

Per page 2 of the Office Action, the examiner has rejected Claims 1-3, and 8, under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over the admitted prior art in view of Schantz (US Patent No. 3,916,139) and Seidler (US Patent No. 4,737,115). Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections as follows.

Claims 1 and 8 - As for independent Claims 1 and 8, the examiner commented that:

“Regarding the limitation that the width of the plate would be slightly less than the width of the notch, it is inherent that the width of the plate would have been slightly less than the width of the notch or aperture.” {Emphasis added}

After reviewing the cited references (including the ‘139 Schantz and ‘115 Seidler Patents), and the specification and the drawing of the present invention, the Applicant respectfully submits that the limitation of the width of the plate being slightly less than the width of the notch is not an inherent feature.

As an illustration of Applicant’s position, the respective advantages and disadvantages of the three possible alternatives (i.e., that is the projecting plate is slightly larger, or equal to, or slightly less than the width of the notch or aperture) are analyzed and compared hereinafter so as to demonstrate that the aforementioned plate being slightly less than the width of the notch is not an inherent feature of the prior art. Though these three alternatives regarding the aforementioned feature are all ostensibly feasible (considered from either a design or manufacturing perspective), they are not all equally desirable. Specifically, the alternative selected and reflected in the claimed inventions is a result of significant research and experiments employed by the inventors, and hence Applicant submits that: (i) it would not be known or obvious to one of ordinary skill in the field, and (ii) is not in any way taught or suggested by the prior art of record.

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The following remarks should be considered merely for purposes of clarification, and in no way limiting on the Claims as presented herein.

Alternative 1 - The width of the projecting plate could be slightly larger than the width of the notch or aperture. If the width of the plate was slightly larger than the width of the notch or aperture, it might become even more useful since the projecting plate would cover the bare wire by even wider area (being an advantage for covering and positively retaining the bare wire thereunder). However, this approach is not desirable for fastening the bare wire since the clamping force associated with the wider plate is comparatively weaker (and hence provides a less positive fastening of the bare wire) than that of the other two alternatives analyzed below.

Alternative 2 - The width of the projecting plate could be equal to the width of the notch or aperture. Under this alternative, the clamping force is comparatively stronger than that of the other two alternatives (i.e., the width of the projecting plate being greater or less than the width of the notch) and hence securely fastening the bare wire between the two components. However, this configuration also causes the portion of the bare wire disposed between the two edges (i.e., of the projecting plate and the second strip) being cut sharply and deeply when the bare wire is contained in the notch and the projecting plate is pressed downwards to fasten the wire. As a result, the effective fastening area of the bare wire is less due to the aforementioned cutting damage and deformation so as to reduce the strength of the joint.

Alternative 3 - The width of the projecting plate could be slightly less than the width of the notch or aperture: By making the width of the projecting plate slightly less than the width of the notch, the damage and deformation experienced during the aforementioned clamping operation is significantly reduced, and at the same time, the clamping area is increased thereby providing for a more positive engagement. Hence, the cutting of the bare wire (by the two edges of the projecting plate and the second strip, respectively) is reduced and the effective fastening area increased. The reduction of clamping force in this third alternative (i.e., over that of the

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second alternative above) is more than offset by the reduction in cutting and increases in fastening area.

Therefore, the configuration of the third alternative (i.e., with the plate being slightly less than the width of the notch or aperture) provides the most positive retention of the bare wire. This functionality (i.e., optimizing the joint through careful selection of the relative widths of the plate and notch or aperture) is in no way taught or suggested by the prior art, and would not be known to one of ordinary skill (as evidenced by the fact that Applicant had to expend significant effort and research to discover this relationship).

Accordingly, Applicant submits that the recited limitation relating to the width of the projecting plate being slightly less than the width of the notch is not an inherent feature of the prior art, but is rather a non-obvious feature specifically discovered and adapted for optimal fastening the bare wire between the projecting plane and the second strip by the inventors hereof.

In further support of this proposition, Applicant also respectfully notes the Examiner's comments regarding the fact that this feature in particular is not taught or suggested by the prior art; see, e.g., the "Reasons for Allowance" portion of the Notice of Allowability dated October 17, 2003.

Therefore, Applicant submits that the inventions of Claims 1 and 8 are not disclosed or suggested by the admitted prior art in view of Schantz and/or Seidler, and hence define patentable subject matter.

Claims 2 and 3 - Claims 2 and 3 are the dependent on Claim 1. Accordingly, Applicant submits that the Examiner's rejections of these claims have been overcome as well, and requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection directed to Claims 2-3.

Other Remarks

Applicant notes that any remarks, amendments, cancellations, or additions made herein are made solely for the purposes of more clearly and particularly describing and claiming the invention, and not for purposes of overcoming art or for patentability. The Examiner should infer

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no (i) adoption of a position with respect to patentability, (ii) change in the Applicant's position with respect to any claim or subject matter of the invention, or (iii) acquiescence in any way to any position taken by the Examiner, not otherwise explicitly discussed.

Furthermore, any remarks made with respect to a particular claim or claims shall be limited to only such claim or claims.

If the Examiner has any questions or comments that may be resolved over the telephone, he is requested to call the undersigned at (858) 675-1670.

Respectfully submitted,

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